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HC JUDGE DEPOSES BEFORE SC COLLEGIUM TO PRESENT HIS CASE

Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav met the Collegium members on Tuesday to explain why he made controversial statements at a recent VHP event

SC PANEL TO CONSIDER EXPLANATION GIVEN

At the event on December 8, Justice Yadav said the Uniform Civil Code's aim was to promote social harmony, gender equality, and secularism. He also allegedly made some communal remarks against Muslims. The SC Collegium asked him to put fourth his version on the remarks to satisfy the principles of natural justice, before any action is considered against him | P9

JUSTICE YADAV GETS U.P. CM YOGI'S BACKING

- While the judge's speech was panned for its communal undertones, it received the backing of UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who said targeting the judge for merely expressing his opinion was wrong
- Justice Yadav had made the controversial remarks while addressing a provincial convention of the legal cell of the VHP at the Allahabad HC

Dec 10

WHEN THE SC SOUGHT RESPONSE FROM ALLAHABAD HC ON THE JUDGE'S REMARKS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Hike NREGS wages, don't make Aadhaar payment must: House panel

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

FLAGGING concern over the low wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), a Parliamentary Panel has recommended raising the wages of the workers.

In a report submitted to Parliament on Tuesday, the panel said that since 2008, it found the amount inadequate and not in consonance with the rising cost of living.

"Taking up work under MGNREGA is a sort of last resort for many of the poor rural masses who do not have any other option of livelihood or job option to utilise but wages of such nominal nature sometime with delayed payment only discourage them and propel them to migrate and seek work in areas giving better remuneration," said the panel, headed by Congress MP Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka.

It said it has urged the Department of Rural Development to increase MGNREGS wages by linking them to an index commensurate with national inflation, adding that it is 'intrigued' by the unrevised base rate to fix rates.

The government notifies the wage rate using Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour and by keeping the wage rates thus obtained on 1st April, 2019 or ₹100, whichever is more as the base for indexation for the states.

The committee urged the government to explore the feasibility of revising the base year and base rate to bring relief to the poor rural masses who rely on MGNREGS for their livelihood.

The panel also recommended that the rural development ministry's Aadhaar-based payment bridge system (ABPS) for making payments should not be made mandatory.

It noted that APBS has been made mandatory since January 1, 2024. "It is too early to make it mandatory as the problems relating to Aadhaar seeding have not been resolved," it said.

A video grab of proceedings of the Lok Sabha during the introduction of two bills on the 'One Nation, One Election' proposal, in New Delhi on Tuesday | PTI

'One poll' bill introduced in LS

Draws fierce protest from Oppn; govt ready to send it to a joint parliamentary committee

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

AMID fierce protests from the Opposition INDIA bloc, the government introduced two contentious bills on the 'One Nation, One Election' proposal in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday through a division of votes, with 269 ayes and 198 nays.

While the Opposition termed it anti-federal and against the basic structure of the Constitution, Union law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal defended the bill on simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies across the country.

Union home minister Amit Shah and Meghwal said that the government is willing to refer the bills to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for further deliberations (JPC). "When the One Nation, One Election bill was taken up in the Cabinet for approval, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that it should be sent to a JPC for detailed discussion. If the law minister is willing to send the bill to the JPC, the discussion on its introduction can end," Shah said in the House.

As the government failed to secure two-thirds majority in the introduction stage, the Opposition wondered if the ruling NDA had the requisite numbers to push them through to amend the Constitution.

Speaker Om Birla allowed a division of votes after Opposition members insisted on it. Taking potshots at the government, Congress MP Manickam Tagore wrote on X, "Two-thirds majority (i.e., 307) was needed out of the total 461 votes... but the government secured only (269), while the Opposition got 198. The 'One Nation, One Election' proposal failed to gain two-thirds support."

The brief discussion on the bill saw uproar as a united Opposition, including the Congress, Samajwadi Party, Trinamool Congress and several other parties demanded its withdrawal. Leading the discussion from the Opposition side, Congress MP Manish Tewari said the bills are an absolute assault on the basic structure of the Constitution and are beyond the legislative competence of the House. "ONOE bill gives illegal powers to Election Commission to advise the President," said Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi.

Opposing the bill, DMK member T R Baalu said, "As my leader M K Stalin said, it is anti-federal. Electors have the right to elect the government for five years. This right cannot be curtailed with simultaneous elections." TMC's Kalyan Banerjee said, "The proposed bill hits the basic structure of the Constitution, so it is *ultra vires*." However, NDA allies TDP and Shiv Sena (Shinde) offered their unwavering support.

YSR CONGRESS ON BOARD, BJD MUM

The YSRCP, which has four LS members, declared its support for the bill. The BJD is yet to reveal its cards — it drew a blank in the LS polls this year, but has seven members in RS. Kovind panel had said 32 parties were in favour of joint polls while 15 were against it

X'MAS FEVER

LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi at a Christmas event organised by Indian Christian Parliamentarians' Council in New Delhi on Tuesday | PTI

Karnataka to soon get DGP for cybercrime wing

SUBHASH CHANDRA NS @ Belagavi

RECORDING a first in India, Karnataka will have a Director General of Police (DGP) in charge of cyber security. Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara said on Tuesday that the state will have a DGP exclusively to monitor cybercrimes in the state, and will take charge soon. Replying to Congress MLA NA Haris in the Legislative Assembly, Dr Parameshwara said that the number of cybercrime cases is increasing with each passing day and this has become a cause for concern. "However, we are handling such cases effectively," he added.

To curb cybercrimes, the state will procure state of the art electronic equipment. "Like the national cybercrime reporting portal 1930, we too have our own portal. There are 43 CEN police stations in the state and police personnel and officers are being trained to combat cybercrimes," he said.

Stating that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has a cybercrime investigation and training centre, he said sophisticated weapons and equipment have been procured for the centre.

Gujarat has Cybercrime and Forensic University, which trains police officers in cyber-related crimes and other aspects, he said and added that he had visited it. The police department has plans to send its officers there for training. A Rs 120-crore command centre will be established in the state, where six lakh CCTV cameras installed in various state government departments can be accessed. Bengaluru has 7,500 such cameras, Dr Parameshwara said.

K'TAKA'S 1st TRANSWOMAN GUEST LECTURER

Sri Krishnadevaraya University of Ballari appointed a transgender as a guest lecturer. Renuka Pojari has done her MA in Kannada | P5

Congress treated Constitution as pvt fiefdom: Shah

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

UNION home minister and the BJP's principal strategist Amit Shah on Tuesday tore into the Congress, terming it an anti-reservation party that recklessly amended the Constitution of India to pander to its appeasement politics during its long stint in government.

Replying to the discussion on the 'Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India' in the Rajya Sabha, Shah accused the grand old party of treating the country's Constitution as its private property and amending it frequently to appease its Muslim vote bank.

"In 1953, the Kaka Kalelkar Commission was formed to provide reservations to the OBC, but its report was nowhere to be found. Had the recommendations of the Commission been accepted, the Mandal Commission would not have been formed," Shah said.

He further said that the Mandal recommendations came out in 1980, but they could be implemented only after the grand old party was voted out of power in 1990.

Describing the Indian Constitution rooted with India's culture and every aspects of natural justice and social ethos, Shah said the Constitution strengthened the roots of democracy and the transfer of power happens without shedding even a drop of blood. "The Constitution is not a tool for misleading or creating confusion in rallies; it is a symbol of belief and faith that must be respected," he said.

Targeting the Gandhi family, Shah cited several amendments which he said were done during the Congress rule to appease one community so that the party controlled by the family can retain power. On the other hand, the amendments done during the BJP rule were aimed at providing justice, welfare, and empowerment to the people, Shah claimed.

"Even before the first elections in the country, Jawaharlal Nehru effected the first Constitutional amendment to curtail the freedom of expression. The Congress considered the Constitution as 'private fiefdom' of one family and deceived Parliament," he said, adding that the Constitution is a symbol of belief and faith that must be respected.

They (Nehru-Gandhi family) considered not just the party as their private property, but also treated the Constitution as their 'private fiefdom'

Amit Shah

JIBE AT RAHUL

Taking potshots at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Shah said: "The 54-year-old leader who calls himself 'yuva', roams around with Constitution"

77 VS 22 CHANGES

Shah said the Congress amended the Constitution 77 times during its 55-year rule, while the BJP made 22 changes in 16 years

TOUGH COMPETITION

Hopcoms outlets on the verge of closure

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

GOING by the current trend of online platforms and private players selling vegetables and fruits procured directly from farmers at competitive prices, outlets of the Karnataka government-owned Horticultural Producers' Cooperative Marketing and Processing Society (Hopcoms) are on the verge of closure.

As many as 140 outlets shut in the past five years. Of them, 89 were in Bengaluru.

Hopcoms was launched in 1965 to help farmers get remunerative prices for their produce and to ensure quality farm fresh products to consumers at affordable prices. There are 26 branches of Hopcoms in Karnataka – in Bengaluru, Belagavi, Bidar, Ballari, Chikkamagaluru, Shivamogga, Gadag, Dharwad, Davanagere and other places – where there were around 600 outlets. But the number of outlets is coming down, especially in the past two years.

Replying to a question in the Legislative Council on the reasons for the closure of Hopcoms outlets, Horticulture Minister SS Mallikarjun said in some places, they had to be shut as employees manning them retired and new appointments were not made.

An outlet of Hopcoms that was shut down in Bengaluru | EXPRESS

The other reason for closure of the outlets in Bengaluru is severe competition by vendors, who sell vegetables and fruits at malls, and opening of exclusive shops at many places by private players. Some outlets in Bengaluru were closed because of road-widening and Metro works, the minister said. P4

NIA court convicts 3 IM operatives

YATHIRAJU @ Bengaluru

THE SPECIAL Court for NIA Cases convicted three Indian Mujahideen (IM) operatives for hatching a conspiracy to carry out blasts ahead of the then US President Barack Obama's visit to India for Republic Day in 2015, as per instructions from Pakistan.

Dr Syed Ismail Afaaque, Abdul Subair and Saddam Husen, all residents of Bhatkal, have been convicted of offences punishable under the provisions of IPC, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the Explosive Substances Act. Afaaque married Arsala Abeer of Karachi in Pakistan.

A case in this regard was registered at Pulakeshinagar police station in the city in 2015 and it was investigated and chargesheeted by the then Central Crime Branch ACP Thammaiah MK under the guidance of the then Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) M Chandrashekar. SPP Shankar Bikkannanavar led the prosecution. P7

EXPRESS READ

Metro Phase-2 struggles for funds

Bengaluru: The much-awaited green signal from the State Cabinet to fund its share of the revised cost of ₹40,614 cr of Bengaluru Metro Phase-2 project failed to come through earlier this month. This has sent alarm bells ringing at BMRCL. The escalation of nearly ₹ 10,000 cr for the 75.06-km network needs to be borne equally by the state and Centre | P2

Gandhis to attend B'gavi meet

Belagavi: Top Congress leaders, including Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and members of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) will be taking part in the CWC scheduled to be held in Belagavi on December 26, according to Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar. He said the meeting is part of the Gandhi Bharat programme, celebrated during the centenary of Congress session held in Belagavi in 1924 | P4

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